



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Box 1630
Miles City, MT 59301
October 15, 2008

DECISION NOTICE for the **DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT** of the **HAGLER RANCH ACQUISITION**

Prepared by Region 7, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

PROPOSED ACTION

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes the fee title purchase of approximately 165 acres of important wildlife habitat along the Yellowstone River. The property is located on the west side of the Yellowstone River and on Wolf Island and is approximately 3 miles northeast of Savage and adjacent to Elk Island Wildlife Management Area (WMA). This acquisition would provide for the protection of wildlife habitat, ensure public access to the Yellowstone River and river islands, and provide a location for a Fishing Access Site (FAS). Refer to the revised draft Environmental Assessment for a more detailed property description and map.

In proposing to acquire the Hagler Ranch, FWP seeks to meet the following needs: To protect and enhance riparian habitats; to enhance the functionality and broaden the “footprint” of Elk Island WMA and reduce recreational conflicts with the neighbors; to provide access to the Yellowstone River and a location for a new FAS; to provide public recreational access to several publicly owned islands in the Yellowstone River; to prevent subdivision of important wildlife habitat in the Yellowstone River riparian corridor.

PROCESS AND SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENT:

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Legal public notification of the availability of a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) evaluating this proposed action was published over the course of the comment period in the Sidney and Glendive newspapers. Notice of the proposed action and availability of the EA appeared in the Glendive, Sidney, and Billings papers and on the FWP website. In addition, electronic and hard copies of the Draft EA were distributed to neighboring landowners, interested individuals, organizations and county, state and federal agencies.

The public comment period began September 25, 2008 and ran through October 14, 2008. Howard Burt met with Richland County Commissioners on October 8, 2008 to

inform them of the proposal, answer any questions, and solicit comments. A public hearing was held in Savage, Montana on October 9, 2008. Nine written or emailed comments were received, all in favor of the fee title purchase. Richland County Commissioners expressed no opposition to the proposal. Four individuals attended the public hearing in Savage; where two favorable comments were expressed.

DECISION

Based on the analysis in the Draft EA public comments, I have determined that this action will not have a significant effect on the natural or human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

After review of this proposal and the public comment and responses, it is my recommendation to the Department Director & FWP Commission that FWP proceed with the Hagler Ranch Acquisition.

No comments opposing the proposed project were received ; therefore, an appeal period is not applicable. There are no modifications to the Draft EA. The Draft EA, together with this Decision Notice, will serve as the final document for this proposal.

The EA and Decision Notice may be viewed at or obtained from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks at the address above or online at: <http://fwp.mt.gov/publicnotices/>

Please direct any further requests or questions to Dwayne Andrews, Acting Region Seven Supervisor, at the address above or dandrews@mt.gov.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dwayne Andrews". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dwayne Andrews
Acting FWP Region Seven Supervisor